

## FLORA OF CYPRUS — A REVIEW OF VOLUME 1

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While engaged on a summer studentship in the Kew herbarium in the early 1960's, I was assigned to Mr R.D. Meikle and charmed by his easy botanical knowledge and anecdote shared equally over a herbarium specimen, or cup of tea on the back steps of the herbarium before the new wing was built. It was at that time I associated his name with the flora of Cyprus, so that publication in 1977 of volume 1 of a *Flora* is especially significant for me.

With the near completion of *Flora Europaea*, and the *Flora of Turkey*, Meikle's volume helps provide a long overdue coverage of a large and floristically complex area north and east of the Mediterranean Sea. *Flora Europaea* includes Crete in its coverage but not Cyprus. In style, Meikle's *Flora* is nearer to that used in *Flora of Turkey*, being more detailed than *Flora Europaea*.

The book measures 24 x 15 cm, contains 832 pages with a coloured frontispiece showing *Onobrychis venosa* (Desf.) Desv., and also 52 line drawings by artists such as Margaret Stones, Mary Grierson, L.M. Ripley, and D. Erasmus. It is a pity that 27 of these drawings were culled from *Flora of Iraq*, and that originals could not have been commissioned for *Flora of Cyprus*. A selection of this size must surely be primarily for decoration and not as an aid to the user. The paper is a little thin and 'ghosting' of print occurs, but in a volume of this size (the book is 4.5 cm thick), is perhaps a necessary evil. Space has been saved by omitting a glossary, but has been wasted in the tabular presentation of specimen citations (where are these specimens housed?). These citations could have been run on with only partial loss of clarity. The lack of a glossary, citation of specimens and citation of the type of the name recognized by Meikle for each taxon described, all suggest that the work is intended primarily for the professional rather than the informed layman or weekend botanist.

Published by the Bentham-Moxon Trust and printed by Robert MacLehose and Co. Ltd, the text is clearly set out and printed, the cloth bound boards substantial, but the spine will probably soon require repair with regular use. The gold blocking of the spine and front board is restrained and attractive.

After a preface by Prof. J.P.M. Brenan in which the importance of the descriptive flora is reaffirmed, and in which the anticipated completion of the *Flora* in a second volume is mentioned, Meikle briefly comments on the topography, climate, botanical divisions and history of botanical exploration of the island. This last section contains itineraries of Sibthorp, Kotschy, Holmboe and others. The treatment restricts itself to gymnosperms, angiosperms and ferns, and families are arranged according to the Bentham and Hooker system.

The names of native or naturalized species are denoted in bold type which might have been better in 10 point instead of 8 point; introduced (but presumably not fully naturalized) taxa, escapes and a selection of cultivated species by small capitals and synonyms by italics. The value of this distinction is marred by apparent inconsistencies; the naturalized *Cistus ladanifer* L. is in bold, but naturalized *Opuntia ficus-indica* (L.) Mill. in small capitals. Similarly, *Liquidambar* is said to be cultivated but is cited in bold typeface.

Habitat data are derived chiefly from herbarium labels, and distribution data outside Cyprus are intended only as a rough guide. It is pleasing to find that garden plants have found a small place in the *Flora* and one recalls Meikle's delightful "Garden Flowers" published in 1963 by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London. Of Australian interest is the inclusion of eight *Eucalyptus* and ten *Acacia* species. It is curious that *Pelargonium* is not apparently present in Cyprus gardens or ever escapes.

The taxonomy is well done but a key to families has been postponed until publication of volume 2. Family descriptions are short and functional, as are generic keys and descriptions. The species keys appear to work well, and species descriptions comprehensive, sometimes being quite long. The citations to the literature of taxa are informative. The Cucurbitaceae is written by C. Jeffrey and Guttiferae by N.K.B. Robson. In anticipation of review Meikle summarizes the modest quota of new nomenclature of volume 1 in his Appendix III; there are 4 new varieties and 17 new combinations. Appendix I is a list of pertinent literature cited in the work, and Appendix II is a list of collectors and collection dates. Families 1-50 (Pinaceae-Theligonaceae) are dealt with in volume 1. The notes on certain taxa are interesting, such as in *Paliurus spina-christi* Mill. and *Pistacia* spp.

Proof reading appears to have been well done but minor inconsistencies in author citation of plant names occur: Medik/Medik., Adanson/Adans. The varieties of *Anemone coronaria* L. are given in italic in the text but roman typeface in the index; Meikle states in the text that these infraspecific categories have doubtful meaning. There is also a poetic misspelling of *Bryonia* in the index; *Byronia* is a generic synonym for *Ilex* L.

At £20.00 per copy the *Flora of Cyprus* is not cheap, but the Bentham-Moxon Trust at Kew, to which orders should be sent, will be assured of sales to institutions and serious students of the flora of the region, such is the utility of the work, Mr Meikle and the Trust are to be congratulated. Perhaps a request might now be made for a slim synoptic flora in English, Greek and Turkish, appropriate for fieldwork and tourist use.

Meikle, R.D. *Flora of Cyprus*, Volume One, pp. 832, one coloured frontispiece, 52 line drawings, 3 appendices, index. Bentham-Moxon Trust: London, 1977. Price £20.00, plus postage (U.K. and overseas surface 90p. per copy).